

Spartan Ops: Valentines Day Dance

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Summary: Captain Lasky has scheduled a mandatory Valentines Day dance and social hour for all Spartan IV's. What could possibly go wrong? (The Vday Dance IS canon, and is listed on Halo 4 LE's special bonus material). Feat: Thorne, Hoya.

Spartan Ops: Valentines Day Dance

The Spartans IV's were called to attention on the equipment deck of the UNSC Infinity.

The MJOLNIR stations were abandoned at the moment, the usually bustling facility in a near dormant state. Equipment stacked in crates cast dark shadows onto the gray floor. Loadout stations were full, biolocked so that only a human could detach necessary firearms in case of enemy infiltration.

Spartan Palmer, never bereft of her precious armor, paced up and down the line of Spartans with eagle-eyed scrutiny. The soldiers themselves were in a mishmash of gear. Half of Infinity's stationed Spartan Fireteams were planetside, hammering out strategic LZ's around valuable Forerunner facilities. The other half, the half present on Infinity, had just returned from 48 straight hours of 'cleanup.' The Spartans were tired, anxious to get some rest. Some were still in armor, though most were in black undersuits. A few, including Spartan Thorne, were in their government issued pyjamas.

So why had the Ice Queen called them? Spartan Palmer cruised past Thorne, her eyes drilling through his forehead with unknowable scrutiny. Thorne had developed a way of 'looking down without looking down,' a power as valuable as an Elite's energy sword.

"Spartans, Captain on deck!" Spartan Palmer shouted, snapping to a salute so firm, Thorne thought the power armor'd crack her forehead open.

Thorne saluted, the familiar form of Captain Thomas Lasky silhouetted in the elevator's purple light. At a console, the small yellow hologram of an antique bombardier flickered into view. Roland clicked his heels together and saluted with grandiose before flickering out of view. Roland's apparent eagerness was amusing sometimes, but mostly annoying. Thorne couldn't decide if it was programmed intentionally, or if it was just a backlash from Roland's organic template.

Lasky approached the tide of saluting Spartans, only tossing his own half-casual salute when Thorne and the rest had finished.

"At ease, everyone," the Captain said easily. Thorne knew that, unlike him, the Captain was from noble stock. The child of an admiral, and now a Captain in his own right. It didn't instill jealousy, but it did make Thorne wonder if Lasky's casual manner was a natural maneuver to keep his troops at ease, or a privilege of birthright. But despite ramblings, of which Thorne was fond, the question remained:

Why had then been called? Inspection? Thorne's fingers lay flat on the soft fabric of his pyjamas, when usually he'd be in quarter-ton MJOLNIR power armor. Often, in training, their sergeant would pull 'tricks' on them. Thorne didn't especially want to prove he could hold his own while in fuzzy pyjamas, but he would if need be. Next to him, Hoya made a noise. A quiet grumbling in the back of his throat. The big man sensed it too.

Something fishy was going on.

Spartan Palmer fell in with the rest of Fireteam Majestic, her nose upturned. No doubts there, not ever.

Meanwhile, Captain Lasky, who'd taken Palmer's place as pacing predator, grew a wry grin. Hoya twisted his lip. Thorne felt a line growing on his brow. Palmer, however, was stone faced.

"First," Lasky said, after a long moment, clearly enjoying seeing elite soldiers squirm, "Great job on the ground. Your previous engagement, with the safe return of Dr. Glassman, deserves commendation."

UNSC AI Roland, at a console near the Captain, flashed to life. He had a broad grin on his face, and pumped two big thumbs-up at the Spartans.

"With every piece of Covenant and Forerunner technology we salvage, we grow stronger," the Captain put his hands behind his back. "Though I know some of you wish you could hang on to the cool toys a little longer," he eyed Thorne, "We'll hopefully have something more suitable for human use later on. Exciting, yes,"

"Don't hold back your enthusiasm," Roland interjected, though the Spartans were rigid at attention.

Lasky cleared his throat. "...Yes, but for the time being, if you've looked at your schedules, you'll see we've got something fun planned. Structured R&R, as the ONI brass calls it. Roland?"

"We're going to have a social gathering," Roland elucidated. He

gestured up to a screen. Flashes of ancient school dances, hearts, and balloons appeared. One of the pictures was a black-and-white of a girl and boy kissing awkwardly. "Though many of the original Earth holidays have been lost - President's Day, Easter, stuff like that - we like to bring one or two back every now and again, even in the UNSC. As you know, today is February 14th. Most of you see it as day two of the planetside engagement, but to our calendars, it is Valentine's Day. The Saint Valentines Massacre should be of interest to some of you killers," Roland winked at Palmer. Thorne tried very hard to not smile. "So please don't murder anyone at the dance. Tonight at 1900 hours, kids!"

Roland vanished. Captain Lasky sighed, a smile on his face. "It is required, before you ask. Hit the showers, Spartans, we'll see you at the dance. Dismissed."

Spartan Palmer broke ranks again, and called for the dismissal in fitting fashion.

As Thorne got back to his bunk, finally flopping on the stringy cot, he realized.

Palmer was the only chic.

* * *

><p>When Thorne awoke some hours later, it was to the sound of everyone else getting ready. Though he snapped awake with a soldier's ease, he relaxed as he saw his fellow Spartans squeezing themselves into dress uniforms. Rising, rubbing the sand from his eyes, Thorne poured himself a glass of juice and watched.<p>

He asked his bunkmate: "Hoya, are you serious about this?"

Hoya was a big man, and what Thorne would call dapper. "Cheer up, son, maybe you'll score a dance with Spartan Palmer."

"Ha-ha," Thorne rose and opened the drawer on his bunk. He didn't use a dress uniform all often. Only for funerals and such. It seemed like a mopey thing to wear, but he took it out anyways. "She probably doesn't know how to dance."

Palmer, who was patrolling the barracks, passed them. She flashed fingers: _I'm watching you._ Thorne paled, and Hoya belted out a deep melodic laugh. "Your balls mounted on her wall if you're not careful," Hoya said.

"I don't even want to think about what that means. Wilson, Edison, you guys _really_ _doing_ this?"

"You are too, Spartan Worg! Cap'n's orders!"

The nickname had stuck since Thorne purloined the Elite energy sword. "Worg, indeed," he sighed, rubbing his eyes again. He stood and grumpily began to shed his fuzzy pyjamas in favor of starched dark gray cotton.

"Hey, if you want, you can wear one of Grammy's sweaters," Hoya eyed his locker. "She sent you that knit cap last time, right?"

"I am not wearing a knit cap."

"But it has ear flaps and pom-poms, son."

"You really need to restrain her," Thorne ground his teeth.

"Are you dissing my Grammy, son?" Hoya reached for Thorne's open locker. Thorne's attempts to bat his arms away were futile, and the big man purloined a striped, knit sweater. He read: "Hoya, baby, this is for your special friend, love Grammy.' I think it's sweet."

"I am NOT your special friend, stop telling your grandmother that!" Thorne grabbed the sweater and shoved it back in the locker.

"Cheer up, buddy, maybe Dr. Halsey will want a dance," Hoya said.

"Sweet Jesus, I hope not. The only reason that old banshee'd get close to someone is to inject someone with something."

"Yeah?" Hoya smirked, adjusting his cufflinks. "Maybe you should go for it then. Penetration like that's better than nothin' at all."

"You're a prick."

"Ha," Hoya pointed. "I see what you did there."

"It wasn't on purpose."

* * *

><p>The equipment in Pelican Bay 3 had been cleared out. The bay was different. Not just different - Spartan Thorne stood in awe at the bay's double doors - it was completely transformed. Instead of a Pelican, there was a buffet table. Streamers hung from the scaffolding on the ceiling, the machinery usually reserved for lifting heavy loads and vehicles in and out of carriers. Pink paper hearts were taped to the walls. A holographic glowing ball shimmered in the center, sending sparkling multi-colored light all over. On the opposite landing, where the Bay Control Tower was, was Roland. Full-sized Roland, his aviator goggles pulled over his eyes, his holographic hands at the controls of a music ... thing.

Stereo.

Shit. Thorne had been in the military for so long, he actually had to fish for the name.

And beneath the magic of the glowing lights, the slow pumping of dance music, and the smell of cookies, punch and candy, were the Spartan IV's.

They were like turkeys in the rain. Standing dumbly, immobile, awkward, occasionally looking around, each one wishing for the protection of their armor. Thorne would have laughed, if only he wasn't one of them. He descended the bay's stairs to the floor and walked, not knowing what else to do, to the table of sweets. UNSC issue brownies. He suspected they were just refurbished protein

squares. Thorne took a bite. His mother always said he'd been a sharp one (pun intended, bless you, Mom). He swallowed, with effort.

The song ended, and Roland spoke over the bay's loudspeakers: "All right, we're all finally here! Happy Valentines day, guys and dolls! For our next dance, please select a partner."

No one moved. It was a room full of men, and Sarah Palmer. Hoya sashayed up to Thorne. "There she is, son. Make a move."

"Hell no," Thorne whispered, though sure she could still hear him. "You do it."

"I'm not suicidal."

In fact, identical conversations were happening all across the Pelican bay.

"Where's Grant?" Someone said.

"Planetside," groaned an answer.

"Ashikawa? Millings? Luto? Farris?"

"Planetside. Planetiside. Planetside. Planetside."

If Roland realized that all of the female Spartan IV's were on Requiem save one, he didn't show it. Or maybe he did. There weren't a ton of female Spartans. Grant, one of Thorne's Majestic teammates, was still in Requiem. But she was a _bro, _and dancing? Wasn't that like, a courtship thing? Was this all a setup for Roland's amusement? The AI had a cunning grin. If that mouth had been more solid, Thorne would've really enjoyed showing it how hard a Spartan out of armor could hit.

"C'mon, kids," Roland encouraged the Spartans. "ONI Human Resources worked really hard at this. It'll be on your psych evals, so just indulge the brass for five minutes and pick a partner. One that doesn't bite, preferably."

"I am so tired of his sass," Thorne grunted to Hoya. "_Fine. _I'll ask Spartan Palmer. Excuse me, Commander- ahh, AHHH! She's with Del Rio. CAPTAIN Del... _what is he doing here? _Agh. Hoya, hold me, I am _so done._"

"Okay." Hoya held out his arms.

"Wait," Thorne paused, removing his hand from his brow. "What?"

"I said c'mere. Give your old boy Hoya a big hug."

"No."

"Don't tell me you're afraid."

"I fear _nothing_, big man."

"Then let's dance, fucker."

With the Office of Navel Intelligence watching, Thorne timidly put

his hands on Hoya's shoulders. Sure, it had been five hundred years since the repealing of Don't Ask Don't Tell, but Thorne's personal motto for such things was a big, fat _DON'T. _Roland, satisfied that everyone was awkwardly paired up, started a music track. Thorne didn't recognize it, but it was a slow, piddling duet, probably one that lasted fifteen minutes.

Under Roland's laughing form, they danced. A slow, lumbering gait, like a Covenant Scarab with its robotic knees blown out. Thorne felt a little effeminate, as Hoya was taller than him.

Hoya looked down, a sparkle in his eye. Sheer amusement at Thorne's unhappiness. "Cheer up, son."

"A Hunter pair. I would rather wrestle a Hunter pair."

"Aw, you're so cute when you're angry."

"I swear to God, Hoya..."

"And you look so good in your dress uni. I didn't know the UNSC sized 'em in small!"

"I didn't know they sized them in DOUCHEBAG."

Hoya laughed. Thorne frowned so hard he thought his jaw would fall off. Hoya said, through his laughter, "Don't get your panties in a bunch!" And then thwacked Thorne right on the butt.

Anger sparked through Thorne like a weasel on steroids. He yanked his arms off Hoya's shoulders, growled, "That's it, you late-night jazz piece of shit," and reared his fist back to punch. Hoya, quick as ever, began to duck, but only managed to land his chin on Thorne's _other_ fist. Spinning back, Hoya tried to regain his balance, but was thwarted by a polished loafer to the gut. The big man crashed through the buffet table, sending multicolored protein squares flaying.

The punch bowl, that is to say, the bowl of recolored electrolyte supplement water, flew into the air. It sailed with unabashed grace, as if the Infinity had suddenly gone Zero-G, and landed with a thud atop the perfectly slicked hair of Spartan Commander Sarah Palmer, and the Infinity's esteemed Captain Del Rio.

Spartan Palmer did not scream.

She did not shout or growl.

Her eyes grew wide, her shoulders hunched, and her lip curled almost imperceptibly. Her fists balled.

And all hell broke loose.

* * *

><p>Captain Thomas Lasky sat at his desk, looking more like a disappointed school administrator than he'd want. He tapped his teeth with his fingernail and then called out: "Roland?"<p>

"Yep, Cap'n."

"That was a horrible idea."

"It's what ONI wanted."

"You can't blame everything on the spooks. I mean, I was the one who put in the req order for streamers. It's partially my fault."

"True. But think of it this way, Captain. At least you rid the galaxy of a lot of ugly decorations for the time being. Spartan Hoya's nose and Spartan Thorne's family jewels were a small price to pay."

"And ten others with sprained limbs, hairline fractures, internal hemorrhaging. All because of Spartan Palmer."

"Good point, Roland."

"Are you going to punish her?" The AI asked.

"Palmer? No. Nah. I'd have done the same thing. I'm just surprised Del Rio didn't _order _her to go ape shit. I say we let this one slide, and thank our lucky stars for biofoam."

"Biofoam up the nose. I do not envy organics, nope."

Lasky cracked a smile. "But we still need to fulfill the structured R&R requirement. Any ideas?"

"I overheard something at the party, Captain, before things went wrong. Spartan Thorne mentioned something about wrestling Hunters..."

End
file.